

The Denver Unity Meeting (3)
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Vol. 79, No. 39, Sept 25, 1962

The "Concourse on Unity" held July 1-7 drew "more than five hundred persons from twenty-one states, Mexico and the Philippines," according to a report by Bro. Carl Ketcherside (hereafter referred to for sake of space as Bro. K.) in his paper, Mission Messenger. This will correct the mistaken idea some brethren have that Denver is the only place troubled with the liberal ideas concerning unity and fellowship. Such a meeting was held several months ago in California, and I am using material from both meetings to set forth these liberal views.

In the California meeting Bro. K. was asked, "What is to be our attitude toward the sincere sprinkled?" and the answer was:

"I regard every sincere conscientious person on the face of the earth who believes in Jesus as the Son of God as God's child and my brother in prospect. He is God's child because he has been begotten by my Father, but he has not been born into the family relationship yet. And my task toward such a person is to act as an O.B., or midwife, to bring him to the place of delivery . . . and until he has been born I cannot invite him to participate in the service any more than I could invite my son while he was being carried in his mother's womb to play baseball with me. So he is my brother in prospect and God's child by the begetting process."

According to this, Bro. K. must accept every person who sincerely believes that Jesus is the Son of God whether sprinkled or not, whether he is a member of any denomination or not. If he says by "sincere believer" he means an "obedient believer," he must reject the "sincere sprinkled," for he admits that the sprinkled person has not obeyed the command to be baptized. So according to Bro. K. every sincere person who believes that Jesus is the Son of God is a child of God "by the begetting process" whether he takes an active part in any form of religion. But let us notice several other difficulties involved here.

Bro. K. bases his position upon 1 John 5:1, which says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God." He makes two mistakes in interpretation. First, he takes the word "believeth" in this verse to mean simply and only the act of believing; with him it does not include obedience, though at other times he so intimates. If he means to include obedience, which takes in baptism, he could not apply this verse as he does to the "sincere sprinkled," or he would have to affirm that sprinkling is obedience to God. Now, if Bro. K's. sincere believer is a child of God, he must have forgiveness of sins, he must be pardoned at this point. All of God's children are pardoned, forgiven. If this believer is pardoned, how can he be baptized for, in order to obtain, forgiveness of sins? (Acts 2:38). When Bro. K. acts as the O.B., or midwife, to bring this person to the place of delivery, by which he means baptism, or birth of water, for what purpose does he baptize him? His sins are already forgiven; and we will learn later that he "cannot sin, because he is begotten of God" (1 John 3:9).

Again, if he is a child of God, he must have the Holy Spirit, for God gives the Spirit to us because we are children (Gal. 4:6). How then can he receive the gift of the Holy Spirit following baptism as is taught in Acts 2:38? More of this later.

Next, if this believer is a child of God, he is one who is not in Christ, because he has not been "baptized into Christ." But Paul tells us that children of God are in Christ (Gal. 3:26). There is no such thing as a child of God not in Christ. We are baptized into Christ, so one is not a child of God until baptized into Christ.

Bro. K. was asked if he agrees with A. Campbell's statement: "I cannot therefore make any one duty the standard of Christian state or character, not even immersion into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Bro. K. replied, "As of this time I cannot believe that anyone is in Christ except those who have been immersed on the basis of his faith in the Messiahship of Jesus. No one can be recognized as in the fellowship of the church, as a member of the body of Christ, who has not been immersed." He went on to say that this does not have anything to do with who shall or shall not be saved, but we will deal with this later. Now, he says this sincere believer in Christ is a begotten child of God but he is not in the body of Christ. If he is not in the body of Christ, he has not received the Holy Spirit, for Paul teaches that only those who have been "baptized into one body" have been made to drink of the one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). But Paul tells us that those who have not the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1:11), do not belong to Christ. So, according to Paul, this sincere believer does not belong to Christ by right of redemption until he is baptized into the one body; but according to Bro. K. this person is already redeemed from sin and a saved person.

The second mistake Bro. K. makes in his interpretation of 1 John 5:1, is that he takes the word "begotten" in its limited meaning of the beginning of the birth process. He views the sincere believer as being in the embryonic state, and as capable of maintaining that state until death, and as being acceptable to God at death, but John did not use the word in that sense. The Greeks used one word (*gennaoo*) to express the ideas of begetting and birth. They also used the same word to express the whole process, especially when reference was made to spiritual birth. When Jesus spoke of birth of water and Spirit, he used that word. Both Thayer and Vine define the word as used by John to mean "the imparting of spiritual life." Now, let us see how John uses the word in other verses.

First, in describing the "begotten ones," John says they do no sin, God's seed abides in them, and they cannot sin (1 John 3:9), and he keepeth himself so the evil one toucheth him not (1 John 5:18). Is this true of one who believes, but is never baptized into Christ? Further, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God (1 John 4:15). It is inconceivable that the "sincere believer" would not confess his faith, but if he does, God abides in him and he abides in God; he is saved before and without baptism, according to Bro. K.

Again, John says the "begotten one" has overcome the world and continues to overcome it (1 John 5:4, 5). Has the sincere sprinkled believer overcome the world? If so, he has done it outside of Christ. John's use of the word "begotten" here, as in verse 1, does not refer to one in the embryonic state, but to one born into the family of God.

Next, the believing begotten one has the witness in himself (1 John 5:10-12). These verses simply affirm that the begotten one has eternal life in the sense of having the Son who is the author of that life. No one has the Son dwelling in him unless he is born into the family of God, so John uses the word "begotten" to refer to the whole process of new birth. In verse 13 John affirms that the believer has eternal life, but in verse 12 he says no one can have the life unless he has the Son. Since this begotten one has the Son, he must have been born into the family of God.

Again, in speaking of the begotten ones, John says we are of God, we know him and are in him, even in his Son Jesus Christ (1 John 6:19, 20). These begotten ones are in Christ. No one is in Christ unless and until he is baptized into Christ. Therefore, the begotten ones of John 5:1 are people who have been baptized into Christ. The term cannot have the meaning of embryo which Bro. K. gives it.

Once more, since these begotten ones do not continue to sin, they keep themselves so the evil one does not touch them, they must be dead to sin and alive unto God. One cannot be dead to sin until he is "baptized into death" to sin; he is not alive to God to walk in newness of life until he is raised from baptism

(Rom. 6:3, 5). These begotten ones, dead to sin, had been baptized into death and raised to walk in the newness of life.